

Good breeding will always tell, we say, and so when that Hellraiser of a horror author Clive Barker made *Nightbreed* we knew we were in for a monstrously good movie. As it happened, bad distribution didn't help the film find the large audience it deserved, but that doesn't matter now that the film has officially been given the highest accolade of *Video World Classic*. Let's just hope that Clive doesn't send one of his stars round to collect the statuette...

A 'breeding' good movie, Clive Barker's underrated monsterfest features a memorable race of night creatures who inhabit a place called Midian - a maze of catacombs beneath a huge graveyard. Into their midst comes Aaron Boone (Craig Sheffer), a troubled teenager who is suspected by the police of being a crazed serial killer. In fact the real killer is Boone's psychiatrist, Decker (played by Canadian horror director David Cronenberg) who has set him up as a scapegoat. Shot dead by the police, Boone's body re-animates and he joins 'The Breed.' But he realises that the psychotic Decker is after his girlfriend Lori (Ann Bobby) and that he must break tribal law to rescue her...

Impressively directed by Barker and well scored by some epic Danny Elfman themes, this ambitious film is let down slightly by its confused narrative. But there are some great monsters on display, the most frightening of which is David Cronenberg's psychotic psychiatrist!

In attempting to bring some epic scope to the genre, Clive has lost sight of some of the single-minded, intimate scariness of *Hellraiser*. It's almost as if Barker were trying to pack too many good things into the package. But for all its faults, *Nightbreed* is still an enjoyable viewing experience that bodes well for future Barker projects. It's also worth bearing in mind the problems that Clive had getting this project off the ground. "Nightbreed was an incredible challenge from the very beginning," he told us in a recent interview. "Chris Figg, the producer of the Hellraiser movies was sacked from the project six weeks in, and then my executive producer Joe Roth became the head of 20th Century Fox. *Nightbreed* was just one small movie on a whole list that Fox were releasing and Roth didn't want to be seen to be playing any favourites, so he almost wilfully distanced himself from the picture.

"Next they put out what was probably the worst ad campaign known to man. David Cronenberg actually wrote to Fox saying: 'How dare you do this to our movie?' Of course in the end it didn't do anywhere near as well as we expected. In fact it ended up being pretty much of a disaster at the box-office."

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But Clive had the last laugh when his movie went on to become a chart-topping video hit in the States. There's now quite a lot of talk about a *Nightbreed II*, though Barker himself is too busy directing the big budget science-fiction thriller *Eden USA* to get involved. If you like good, old fashioned monster movies then you'll be Barkering up the right tree by checking *Nightbreed* out on the Warner Home Video label today.

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